



HB 596
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Domestic and Sexual Violence Services of Carbon County

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February 18th, 2009

To: House Human Services Committee
From: Lea Hegge, Education Coordinator
Re: HB 596 – Healthy Youth Sex Education

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and Members of the House Human Services Committee. For the record, my name is Lea Hegge and I am the Education Coordinator for Domestic and Sexual Violence Services of Carbon County (DSVS). Our mission is to eliminate domestic, dating and sexual violence in Carbon County through awareness and prevention activities, and to provide coordinated support and services to women, children, families and communities impacted by this violence. **We rise in support of House Bill 596.**

We believe it is imperative that youth are provided information and skills to **lead healthy lives and make positive choices**. DSVS works with youth to develop leadership, prevent violence in our communities and promote healthy relationships in three distinct ways:

- DSVS implements curricular instruction in all six Carbon County high schools, speaking with youth about **affective communication and conflict resolution in dating relationships, personal rights, respect, healthy sexuality, sexual assault and becoming savvy consumers of the media**. The results of these interactive educational programs have been immense. Last year, **65% of students reached, were able to list at least 5 rights they have in a dating and/or sexual relationship, including the rights to respect, to say “no” and be heard, and to stop being physical or sexual with a partner at any time**. Teen leaders have immersed as positive mentors for peers and younger students and have acquired skills to **confidently navigate relationships with positive communication skills, knowledge of personal rights and respect for their partners**.
- DSVS also works with teen leaders to plan and implement the **Annual Carbon County Teen Dating Violence Prevention Summit**. The Teen Summits, attended by 120 youth, give teens the opportunity to explore their own **attitudes about violence, gender, sexuality, and media** and gain the knowledge, tools, resources, leadership skills and confidence necessary to **create healthy relationships and an open-minded, violence-free climate in their schools and in their personal relationships**.
- Additionally, stemming from the success of the Teen Summits, student leaders have created and run **Violence Prevention Clubs** at their schools through funding from DSVS for three years. These Clubs more deeply address issues relating to **violence, healthy relationships and media literacy**.

The following are testimonies from Carbon County high school students:

Ashley, Sophomore, Fromberg High School: We have been actively involved in Teens Against Dating Violence prevention/educational system for 4-5 years. Over time, I've learned many things including the

following: **healthy relationships, legal regulations, how to help, identifying stereotypes and victimization in the media, what to do if you're attacked, and how to appropriately inform my peers about related issues.** Being involved with this program is not only fun and efficient, but we work with many great people in our efforts to teach other schools, modeling different types of activities for prevention and raising awareness. **Our age groups range, targeting different audiences and subject matters for that specific age bracket. Primary prevention and awareness is critical for schools, and should be required education.** With every growing generation, images in the media become less and less trustworthy. Various forms of bullying and domestic violence need to be acknowledged far more than they are today. By educating our youth, we can help prevent future problems in relation to what we learn about. .

BaLeigh, Senior, Belfry High School: As a Carbon County Teen Dating Violence Prevention Summit Steering Committee Member, I have greatly **developed my leadership skills, worked with some really awesome individuals and witnessed the positive influence a dedicated, well organized group of teens can have on a community.** I am an advocate for violence prevention because I am confident that by speaking up and taking a stand, **my generation can help put an end to violence and abuse.** The information I have learned through the violence prevention programs I am involved with has **influenced me greatly and I firmly believe that implementing a curriculum for violence prevention, healthy relationships and sexuality in our schools would provide great opportunities for teens to learn to embrace equality and respect and create a much needed social change.**

Emily, Senior, Belfry High School: This is my second year working with DSVS and Lea and Kirt have come to our school. I think the most important thing we do is teach students about **healthy relationships.** We also talk a lot about **respect and communication.** I've used some of the skills in **my own relationships** and I used to be really shy. Now I know that **I can communicate and I deserve to be heard. I don't do anything that I'm not comfortable with and I guess my confidence is better now.**

Hannah, Junior, Red Lodge High School: I have been working with DSVS for four years. I think the most important part about the Teen Summit is that students learn how to help their friends if they are in an abusive relationship or if they are sexually assaulted. I also think it's really important to try to **prevent that kind of violence from happening in the first place.** That's what we try to do.

Gordon, Senior, Roberts High School: I just joined the steering committee this year, but DSVS has come to our school quite a few times in the past couple of years. I'm interested because I think we all need to **think about how we treat and communicate with each other.** I like the media stuff that we do. We've talked a lot about men and women and violence in the media. We've had really **great discussions about homophobia and creating our own identity without thinking about what society wants us to be like.** That's cool.

We urge you to pass HB 596. Thank you for your time and attention. If you have questions, I am available to provide further information.